

BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Some non-profit authorities suggest that you try to find members for your organization's board that encompass three key characteristics - workers, wisdom, and wealth. No matter what the composition of your board, you are looking for one universal characteristic – commitment. It is also critical that you hold Board Orientation sessions that engage all Board members in discussions that lead to a better understanding of their expected roles and responsibilities. Many of the topics included in the remainder of this packet (annual reporting requirements to the IRS and State of MO, Lobbying restrictions, Sunshine Law requirements, etc.) should be included as topics in that Orientation.

But what are the roles and responsibilities of the Board? Richard T. Ingram, author of Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards (available from the National Center for Nonprofit Boards – listed below) suggests the following ten major responsibilities that any Board must be prepared to carry out.

1. determine the organization's mission and purposes;
2. select the executive;
3. support the executive and review his or her performance;
4. ensure effective organizational planning;
5. ensure adequate resources;
6. manage resources effectively
7. determine and monitor the organization's programs and services;
8. enhance the organization's public image
9. serve as a court of appeal;
10. assess its own performance.

Each board member should receive an individual orientation to their roles and responsibilities as well participate in regular Board retreats/orientations. A prospective board member should easily be able to find out the following information about your organization;

1. what is the mission of the organization?
2. who are the leaders of the organization?
3. what is the financial condition of the organization?
4. what is the board member's job description?
5. how long is my term?
6. how much volunteer time will be required of me in a normal year?
7. how many meetings will I be expected to attend and where are they held?
8. who pays for my expenses as a board member?
9. are all board members expected to be donors?

There are numerous resources for non-profit organizations that can help your board better understand and carry out the ten responsibilities suggested above.

The BoardSource is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening their board of directors. They produce numerous resources, including a monthly newsletter called BOARD MEMBER. Ask for their publication list. They have a series of titles related to Board Committee operations, nonprofit governance, and other strategic issues that non-profit boards will need to deal with. You can contact this organization at:

BoardSource

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<http://boardsource.org/main.htm>

An excellent overview of Board Responsibilities is included in:

Nonprofit Board Answer Book – Practical Guidelines for Board Members and Chief Executives by Robert C. Andringa and Ted W. Engstrom, 1997 available from BoardSource (see address above). This book includes sections on Board functions, Board structure and process, Board-Staff relations, selection and development of board members, Board and committee meetings, and other critical issues.

A resource book that you will find helpful as your accounting and budgeting requirements become more sophisticated is: *A Nonprofit Organization Operating Manual* by Arnold J. and Philip R. Olenick. 1991, 484 pages, \$29.95 from: The Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003-3076, Phone: 800-424-9836 or <http://www.fdncenter.org> Chapters are included on; accounting methods, budgeting strategies, tax return preparation, fundraising, organizational management, auditing policies, income-producing ventures, and long-range planning.

A resource book to help your board get a better perspective on their governance responsibility is: *Boards that Make A Difference* by John Carver, 1997, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104 Phone: (415) 433-1740. Carver suggests that board members can wear at least three different hats. The “governance” hat is worn only when the full board meets, proper notice has been given and a quorum is present. The “implementation” hat is worn only when the board gives one or more board members authority to implement a board policy. The “volunteer” hat is worn at all other times, when board members are involved with organizational activities as volunteers.

All staff and board members should be able to answer five basic questions about their roles within the non-profit organization;

- What am I expected to do?
- Why is it important?
- Do I have authority to do it?
- When I need help, where can I go?
- How am I doing so far?

A resource for helping your board conduct a self-assessment is: *The Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool* by Peter F. Drucker and Gary J. Stern, Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, 320 Park Ave, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10022 Phone: (212) 224-1174

This tool, first developed in 1990, helps your board examine the following five questions:

- What is our mission?
- Who is our customer?
- What does the customer value?
- What are our results?
- What is our plan?

For ordering information, visit the Drucker Foundation web-site at <http://www.pfdf.org>



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